



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement on Recent Violence in Uzbekistan**

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
May 19, 2005

Mr. Chairman, the United States is deeply concerned by the events which unfolded in Uzbekistan this past weekend in and around the city of Andijan.

First, we condemn the violent attack by armed individuals on the prison and on government facilities in Andijan. There is no justification for such acts of violence.

Secondly, we are deeply disturbed by reports that Uzbek authorities fired on demonstrators consisting, from what we understand at this point, principally of civilians in the city of Andijan, and that a number of civilians have been killed. Those are deeply disturbing facts. The United States condemns the indiscriminate use of force against unarmed civilians and deeply regrets the substantial loss of life.

We urge the Government of Uzbekistan to call for a credible and transparent international investigation of the events with OSCE or other credible international participation. The May 18 visit to Andijan for Ambassadors, media and international organizations was a useful, but only a first step. It is important that impartial observers assess the situation to find out exactly what happened and, very importantly, obtain an accurate account of the casualties. The lack of knowledge about what has really happened and the extent of the casualties, will only continue to fuel speculation and anxiety.

We therefore urge the Government of Uzbekistan to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN High Commissioner on Refugees and other humanitarian organizations full access to the region.

We call upon the Government of Uzbekistan to lift remaining restrictions on independent news broadcasts and the Internet immediately. Blocked access to information only contributes to alarm and anxiety over the nature of what has really happened. We urge the Government of Uzbekistan to work with the Representative on Freedom of the Media on developing ways to ensure that citizens have free access to independent media.

The United States remains very concerned about the well being of those who have crossed the border into Kyrgyzstan. We join UNHCR in welcoming the Kyrgyz government's assurances that people will not be forcibly returned to Uzbekistan and its moves also to register the newcomers as asylum-seekers. We trust that these individuals will continue to be well treated.

We note President Karimov's statement at a press conference that "Uzbekistan is a full-fledged OSCE member and the Republic has a Mission of this Organization which can also

help Uzbekistan solve this problem." We hope that Uzbek officials will indeed follow through on the words of their President, and undertake a credible and transparent investigation into events and will facilitate the OSCE's active engagement.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.